



Owner-Operator's Business  
Association of Canada

Association professionnelle des  
routiers autonomes du Canada

*...from the  
director's chair*

# Promoting a culture of compliance

Wow, what a show! First of all, a hearty thanks to everyone who came by the OBAC booth at Truck World last month.

We were absolutely overwhelmed, and I'm especially grateful to several of our members who turned out to do booth duty and share so generously of their time and their knowledge of the industry. Our booth was so busy that we had the aisle clogged most of the time, to the point where other exhibitors were coming by to see what was drawing the crowds. And don't you know – it was our spiffy speed-limiter T-shirts.

They sport the simple, common-sense slogan, MY SPEED GOVERNOR IS IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT, but they were attracting enough attention to entice OTA's Barry Montague to drop by the booth for a good-natured visit. The booth staff went right to work on him, hoping to make him see the light, but despite his first-rate sense of humour, he's going to be a tough nut to crack.

Second order of business is to congratulate Claude Robert, CEO of Groupe Robert of Boucherville, Que., on his recent appointment as Chair of the Canadian Trucking Alliance (CTA). Robert takes over from John Cyopek, who passed away recently following a lengthy battle with cancer.

I've met and talked to many of Robert's drivers, and I'm told he treats his people well and runs a pretty efficient operation. Undoubtedly his talents as an innovative industry leader will serve him well in his mission to build "a new culture of competition based on compliance" in the industry.

And just as you'd expect from the leader of a company whose tagline is "Robert Takes Charge," Robert is pushing hard for everyone in the industry to get serious about eliminating excessive speed and improving fuel efficiency. He wants to get tough, too, about Hours-of-Service

compliance, and flush illegal operators out of the industry – a must if we want to get rates up, make sure drivers are paid what they're worth, and attract quality people to the industry. So far, so good. What puzzles me, though, is why someone so hell-bent on industry taking charge and getting its house in order wants government to mandate, with speed-limiters and electronic on-board recorders (EOBRs), what they – we – should be doing ourselves.

We encourage driving for maximum fuel economy, which includes slowing down, and we certainly don't condone either speeding or falsifying logbooks – that's what we have enforcement for. And if a fleet chooses to make governed engines part of its speed management plan, that's up to them.

What irks me is asking government to mandate speed-limiters on all trucks to deal with the competitiveness and recruiting issues of carriers who should be dealing with those issues themselves.

Paper logbooks are a joke, according to Robert, and frankly, I've got to agree with him.

The fact that drivers are able – often encouraged – to hide a great deal of their wasted time on the top line of the log has cost drivers and owner/operators millions of dollars over the years.

If carriers were required to compensate drivers for time spent on-duty doing something other than driving, my guess is that we wouldn't see falsification to the extent we now do.

But if proponents of EOBRs are expecting to get to sudden compliance with HoS once everyone's hooked up, they should give their heads a shake.

The technology does nothing to address the on-duty not driving demands of carriers, brokers, and shippers.



**Joanne  
Ritchie:  
OBAC  
executive  
director**

Black boxes still rely on driver input, and as long as drivers feel pressured to accommodate unreasonable delivery schedules, or struggle to make sure there are enough hours left in the week to make some money, that input will be no more accurate than it is in a paper log.

We're solidly behind Robert and the CTA when it comes to ridding the industry of illegal operators. I agree that once they're flushed out of the system – or exposed by stricter monitoring – the rest of us will be better positioned to get the rates up and start making a bit of money.

But at the end of the day, tighter monitoring of a 'broken system' by any means – whether paper or electronic – is ludicrous. So why not work harder to fix the system?

In building this new culture, Robert talks about working with all the provincial associations under the CTA – and I must say I'm disappointed there's no mention of working with OBAC, the unions, and other driver groups in the country.

The days of unilateral management of this business have come and gone. Drivers and owner/operators have a stake in how the industry functions and how it's regulated, and if we expect to see any real change, the views of those who are looking at issues from behind the steering wheel have got to be counted.

Robert might be surprised at just how much sense our arguments do make if he took the time to listen. And finally, don't laugh when I say this, but I get all choked up and teary-eyed when Robert talks about the possibility of reunifying Canada through trucking. 10-4.